In his message, the US President, applauding Indian democracy and economy and acknowledging India as an influential voice in the world community stated that the two countries should work more closely than ever as benefits the two of the world's greatest democracies.

(b) PM had a very cordial -meeting with President Clinton in September. Interaction between the two countries has stepped-up at various levels to discuss issues mutual importance. The US Assistant Secretary of State, Karl Inderfurth and the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Thomas Pickering have held discussions in Delhi. The US Secretary of State is visiting Delhi on 18 & 19 November. The US Commerce Secretary and the Secretary, Health and Human Services are also scheduled to visit before the end of this year.

Functioning of India's Embassies in Gulf-countries

180. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a nine-member delegation of MPs went on a 10-day four to the Gulf-countries to find out how Indian Embassies were functioning in these countries;

(b) if so, the outcome of their visit; and

(c) the action being taken, if any, to improve . the functioning of the embassies in Gulf-countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The delegation observed the functioning of the Indian missions in the Gulf countries and held discussions with a cross section of the Indian community, and met local dignitaries and Parliamentarians. The delegation's report containing observations and recommendations is under preparation.

(c) Action for improving the functioning of the Indian missions in the Gulf countries is a continuous process. Visits by officials from the Ministry of External Affairs are undertaken from time to time to observe the functioning of the missions and to assess their staffing needs and available facilities with a view to enhance the overall functioning of the missions. An official team visited Gulf countries in May 1997. A Conference of Indian Heads of Missions in the Gulf countries was held in Abu Dhabi in September 1997 to discuss various issues concerning the functionings of the missions.

Strengthening of Relationship Between U.K. and India

181. SHRI SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister had met the British Foreign Secretary, who accompanied Queen Elizabeth during her recent visit to India; and

(b) at what levels close relationship between India and U.K. is likely to be strengthened indicating whether U. K. supported India for the membership of the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) as well as for a seat in the Security Council of United Nations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERWANI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Our objective is to work with the UK to strengthen our friendly ties and mutually beneficial cooperation in a wide range of areas. The UK has consistantly supported India's membership of the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM). The decision will be taken by consensus among the 25 ASEAN and European current members of ASEM. Regarding the UNSC seat, India's position is that, in the first instance, objective, global, non-doscriminatory criteria for UNSC expansion which also provides for adequate representation of the developing countries, should be established.

Amnesty to Indian Emigrants by Saudi Government

182. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA
SHRI GAYA SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that thousands of